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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SCE

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SUBJECT: A/S FRIED OUTLINES NEXT STEPS FOR KOSOVO: SERBIA ON
DIFFERENT PATH

Classified by: Ambassador Michael C. Polt for reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) Summary. Visiting A/S Fried urged Serbia's political leaders and the public to lead their country to a future in Europe following Kosovo's future independence. In separate meetings, July 10, the A/S outlined for President Tadic, PM Kostunica, and FM Jeremic the likely scenario of a minimalist UNSC resolution and negotiations as next steps leading inexorably toward Kosovo independence. The Serbian leaders uniformly rejected Kosovo independence. While President Tadic and FM Jeremic suggested they might have wanted to do more to demonstrate their commitment to Serbia's euro-atlantic future and good relations with the U.S, the former's political vulnerabilities and the latter's inexperience prevented them from offering any new ideas. A sour and uncompromising Kostunica, on the other hand, appears to have upped the ante, appearing to set compliance with the UN principle of territorial integrity as a precondition for further talks and threatening that insistence of independence for Kosovo would damage U.S.-Serbia relations. End summary.

THE MESSAGE: PREPARE SERBIA FOR EUROPE AS KOSOVO MOVES TOWARD
INDEPENDENCE

12. (C) A/S Fried's clear and cautionary message to Serbia's leadership and to the Contact Group was the same: The international community is united in wanting Serbia in the European Union and the transatlantic community; and Serbia's leadership should not assume an unsustainable position that might close this door. The A/S said that the purpose of his visit was not to persuade Serbia to support Kosovo independence, but, rather, to encourage Serbia to plan for it and for the country's future.

13. (C) Describing the steps ahead, the A/S told Serbia's leaders to expect the U.S. to introduce a new, "minimalist" resolution before the UN Security Council, in the next few days that would be silent on independence and would authorize the continued presence of the international community presence. The U.S. had not proposed consideration of a resolution that speaks of independence, the A/S noted, in deference to Russian concerns. Silence notwithstanding, he said, the outcome of the 120-day round of negotiations that will follow introduction of the UNSC resolution was inevitable -- the supervised independence of Kosovo. Referring to President Bush's recent statements in Albania and Bulgaria, A/S Fried said there could be no further delay. He urged Serbia's leaders to use period of negotiations constructively and strategically to accelerate his country's progress toward EU accession.

TADIC FRETS ABOUT (OWN) FUTURE

14. (C) Serbian President Boris Tadic told A/S Fried that he hoped for Serbia's Euro-Atlantic future and said he would do everything in his power to protect the Serbia-U.S. relations, but worried that the price of Kosovo independence could be his own political survival.

(Note: Serbia is scheduled to hold presidential elections by or shortly after the end of 2007.) The public would "need to punish someone," he said. Tadic identified three scenarios that jeopardize regional stability:

- The SRSG speaking about the threat of regional violence;
- Serbian politicians proclaiming that Kosovo will always be part of Serbia; and
- U.S. officials stating the inevitability of Kosovo independence.

Noting that Kosovo's independence would read domestically as the U.S. having supported the Albanians against the Serb, Tadic bemoaned that, as in 1999, he would again have a tough time explaining to the public the importance of good relations with the U.S. Tadic appealed to the A/S not to define Serbia's future as a choice between Kosovo and Europe. "Serbia does not have to make that choice," the A/S responded. "Milosevic lost Kosovo the day he went to war with NATO. You can choose Europe, or not."

15. (C) Tadic acknowledged that, in opposing a UN resolution on Kosovo, Russia was acting in its own interest, not Serbia's, and sought trade-offs from the EU and, most especially, from the U.S. Putin had told him as much. Tadic said that Serbia stands to lose from a Russian veto in the Security Council, spinning out a scenario that would end in unilateral declaration of independence for Kosovo, followed by U.S. and European recognition and increased distance between the U.S. and Serbia.

PM KOSTUNICA: YOU STARTED IT

16. (C) A/S Fried stressed, in his meeting with PM Kostunica, the importance of the UN resolution as a mechanism for authorizing the international civilian presence and a new mandate for KFOR and ESDP and underscoring the importance of U.S. friendship with Serbia. He

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advised Kostunica to use the 120 days of negotiations well to lead Serbia into Europe. "The only way for the people of this region to live together again in unity is within the EU," he said.

17. (C) Kostunica roundly dismissed the need for a new UNSC resolution. Resolution 1244 remains valid, he said, and is the beginning point for all negotiations. The PM maintained that negotiations had failed because Ahtisaari, having started from the predetermined the outcome of Kosovo independence, had violated the UN Charter principle of territorial integrity. New negotiations should not be [pre]conditioned, Kostunica said, except by the principles of the UN Charter. The PM questioned the logic of negotiations, per se. "Negotiations on what?" he rhetorically demanded, "[our] territorial integrity and sovereignty of the State?" He warned that U.S. position on Kosovo risked deterioration of U.S.-Serbian relations.

NEXT STEPS TO A SERBIAN BEAT

18. (C) Caustically dismissing the Sarkozy plan ("an American proposal translated into French" and the elements of the resolution that the A/S had sketched ("number six resolution, each one worse than the last), he outlined his own vision of the steps ahead. Kostunica said that, within a matter of days, Serbia's parliament would prepare its new plan for Kosovo. An acceptable future, he said, would grant everything but independence. He would propose that the UNSC consider a plan of supervised autonomy in which:

- Kosovo authorities would have decision-making authority;
- Serbia would protect Serbs, Serbian churches, and monuments in Kosovo; and
- Serbia would retain its territorial integrity.

19. (C) A/S Fried agreed on the need for protections of Serbs and Serbian heritage and pointed toward KFOR and the International Community as the means for this protection and the resolution as the mechanism for reinforcing their mandate. He disputed Kostunica's view of UNSC resolution 1244, noting that in passing 1244, the UNSC foresaw that final status would be the subject of future discussions,

and he cited the Secretary General's July 9 statement on the importance of not delaying progress on Kosovo.

¶10. (C) The A/S took the opportunity to underscore the importance of Kosovo Serbs remaining in Kosovo and to raise concern about reports that Serbian authorities were encouraging radicalism and advising or pressuring Kosovo Serbs not to cooperate with the local governing bodies or with KFOR. The PM agreed on the importance of Serbs remaining in and being able to return to Kosovo, but emphatically refused to advise them to respect the leadership of Kosovo authorities whom he labeled as "criminals." The A/S countered that the PM's view of the region's future ignores Milosevic's responsibility for the present. "You do not bear responsibility for what happened in the '90s. It is your fate to bear the consequences of how what happened in the '90s will play out," he said, and reiterated the U.S. interest in preserving the possibility of friendship with Serbia and its hope that Serbia not close the door.

SOUNDS OF SILENCE

¶11. (C) Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic disputed that the resolution was truly silent on independence. If it does not positively reaffirm 1244 and opens up the way for independence, Serbia will not support it, Jeremic said. The A/S counseled the new FM to consider carefully Serbia's next moves and to ensure that they are constructive. He cautioned against telling Russia to block the resolution, and he suggested, instead, that Jeremic quietly ask the GOR to support the resolution. Jeremic, somewhat shaken, protested that this was impossible, then, in the same breath, raced through a long list of Serbia's democratic bona fides and principle the Serbia and the U.S. hold in common. He insisted that his government had passionately sought new negotiations because of a conviction that Serbia and Kosovo could reach an agreement on the future.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) There was no innovation or new substance in Belgrade's responses to the A/S's message. If anything, the achievement of a further delay in a Kosovo status decision has hardened the rhetoric of both the Tadic and Kostunica camps. Kostunica is circling the wagons. Neither Tadic nor Jeremic stray far off-message. The planned July 24 Parliamentary session on Kosovo will further box in the hard line Belgrade stance, bringing together the positions of the Kostunica, Tadic, Milosevic's Socialists and Serbia's Radicals. Kostunica may well be able to hold a line that refuses further negotiation if Kosovo independence is on the table, or, if talks do continue, that they will fail.

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¶13. (U)A/S Fried cleared this cable.
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